

Police report 'dramatic increase' in collisions on Caledon roads

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Police data shows the number of fatal collisions in Caledon has more than doubled year over year.

In 2022, there were seven fatal collisions in Caledon. In 2023, there were 15. This data, and more, was shared with Caledon Council at its March 26 meeting by Caledon OPP's detachment commander, Inspector MaryLouise Kearns.

'There has been a dramatic increase in the number of collisions that have happened on Caledon roadways,' said Kearns. 'Unfortunately, when we look closer at all of the Caledon, fatal, or even personal injury, accidents, there is not just one reason as to why these collisions are occurring.'

Kearns said the vast majority of collisions in Caledon are occurring due to people not following traffic laws, whether that means speeding, not wearing seatbelts, or driver inattention.

She explained each fatal collision in Caledon is reviewed by members of the Caledon OPP at a committee, where officers look for improvements that can be made to road safety.

'These meetings are informative for those involved, allowing an opportunity for partners to gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances and contributing factors associated with these fatal collisions,' said Kearns. 'Countermeasures are identified through these discussions that will help lead to the prevention of recurrence.'

Something Caledon OPP have noticed is fatal collisions are happening in Caledon on roads where they've never occurred before. Kearns said the public should be aware these collisions are happening even on roads they may not have considered to be dangerous.

She said many of the deaths from collisions that happened in Caledon last year were preventable. Speeding is still the number one cause of collisions, said Kearns, adding police saw many instances where people were not obeying lights, stop signs, or passing rules.

'The impact and collateral damage is so long lasting for the families that have lost their loved ones on the road,' said Kearns. 'These are preventable collisions, people think going 140 in a 100 is going to get them there five minutes faster, you might never get there.'

Kearns said Caledon OPP continue to be proactive in trying to stop tragic events from occurring on Caledon roadways.

In 2023, Caledon OPP laid 13,256 Highway Traffic Act charges, a 19 per cent increase from 2022. Police also laid 359 Criminal Code charges related to traffic offences, a 15 per cent increase from 2022.

There were 245 motor vehicle collisions that resulted in personal injury in 2023, and 1,711 that resulted in property damage.

Kearns shared that Caledon OPP continues to participate in Provincial traffic safety campaigns. On the Thanksgiving long weekend last year, Caledon OPP issued 45 tickets to people not wearing seatbelts, 84 tickets to speeders, impounded eight vehicles from people caught stunt driving, and caught four impaired drivers.

Caledon OPP also ran its annual Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) campaign from November 16 to January 1. This campaign caught 46 impaired drivers on Caledon roads.

"I can truly say I am proud of our members' collective efforts in improving road safety in Caledon," said Kearns.

In 2024 so far, Kearns said officers have issued 5,484 tickets related to traffic in Caledon. By March 2023, officers had issued 3,257 tickets.

"The increase in tickets year-to-year is tremendous," she said.

On March 20 this year, Kearns said Caledon OPP ran a "blitz" and conducted 61 truck inspections in the area of Mayfield Road and Highway 410. The blitz resulted in 25 charges being laid, eight warnings issued, and 10 trucks being taken out of service.

Kearns said traffic safety is everyone's responsibility and that everyone needs to be part of the solution.

"All of us in the room" haven't had perfect driving days. We all have to be part of the change we want to see," she said.

Ward 1 Councillor Lynn Kiernan said the community has noticed an increase in police presence on the roads and that she appreciates the efforts being made to keep Caledon roads safe.

Regional Councillor Christina Early said she was happy to hear about the recent truck blitz and said it's the type of thing that should be happening more in Caledon.

"We need to get the word out that we mean business" that we are going to do these inspections and we are going to make sure that you're safe on our roads," said Early.

Kearns said Caledon OPP plans to continue the truck blitzes, at least quarterly.

Ward 2 Councillor Dave Sheen said he appreciates seeing an increase in the number of tickets issued in Caledon. He also said the community has noticed an increase in police presence on the road.

"I'm amazed at the number of drunk drivers that you're pulling off the road," said Sheen.

Kearns agreed and said she can't believe the amount of people who are driving impaired. She said harsher penalties should be implemented by the courts for impaired drivers.

Kearns said she encourages Caledon residents to call police when they see dangerous driving in Caledon, even if they don't catch a license plate. Often, she said a vehicle colour and travel direction will be enough for an officer out on the roads to catch someone.

"Call us right away so we can do our job," said Kearns.